

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 091635

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, KU

SUBJECT: ARAB BOYCOTT REQUEST TO GENERAL MOTORS

1. GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION WASHINGTON REP HAS INFORMED DEPARTMENT APRIL 14 THAT GM'S KUWAITI AGENT AL-GHANIM AND SONS HAS RECEIVED AND TRANSMITTED TO GM DETROIT A LETTER FROM THE KUWAITI OFFICE OF THE ARAB BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL THREATENING GM WITH BLACKLISTING UNLESS GM CEASED TO SELL CERTAIN TYPES OF DIESEL ENGINES WITH MILITARY APPLICATIONS TO ISRAEL.

2. IN DISCUSSION WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICERS, GM REP ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DIESEL ENGINES SOLD THROUGH ITS DISTRIBUTORS IN ISRAEL COULD AND, INDEED, DID HAVE MILITARY USES, BUT POINTED OUT FIRM HAD BEEN SELLING THESE ENGINES FOR SOME-TIME WITHOUT ANY INDICATION OF INTEREST FROM ANY ARAB BOYCOTT OFFICE. HE SAID GM HAD NO INTENTION TO COMPLY WITH BOYCOTT REQUEST. AT THIS STAGE, GM SIMPLY WANTED TO DISCUSS INFORMALLY RECEIPT OF LETTER WITH DEPT PRIOR TO DECIDING WHAT STEPS TO TAKE NEXT.

3. AFTER ASSURING GM REP THAT DEPT CERTAINLY DID NOT WANT TO SEE GM PUT ON ARAB BOYCOTT LIST, DEPT OFFICERS SUGGESTED THAT GM SEEK INITIALLY FROM ITS KUWAITI DISTRIBUTOR, AL-GHANIM AND SONS, INFORMATION AS TO BACKGROUND AND

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SERIOUSNESS OF KUWAITI BOYCOTT THREAT AND GUIDANCE AS TO

WHAT STEPS COMPANY MIGHT APPROPRIATELY TAKE. DEPT STRONGLY COUNSELLED THE UTMOST DISCRETION AT THIS STAGE OF INQUIRY TO AVOID DANGER THAT PUBLIC DISCLOSURE WOULD HARDEN KUWAITI BOYCOTT OFFICE'S POSITION. BEFORE DEPARTING, GM REP ASKED DEPARTMENT OFFICERS WHETHER BOYCOTT THREAT, RECEIVED ONLY IN KUWAIT, MIGHT NOT REPRESENT ATTEMPT BY SOMEONE IN KUWAIT TO DEPRIVE AL-GHANIM AND SONS OF ITS PROFITABLE GM OPERATION.

4. COMMENT: AT THIS STAGE, EMBASSY SHOULD USE THIS CABLE FOR INFORMATION ONLY. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS EMBASSY MIGHT HAVE ON REASONS FOR SURFACING OF BOYCOTT THREAT AT THIS TIME AND WHETHER THERE MAY BE SOME POLITICAL OR OTHER EXPLANATION FOR BOYCOTT THREAT WHICH WOULD INVOLVE SUCH A PROMINENT KUWAITI FAMILY AS AL-GHANIM, AS WELL AS MAJOR U.S. CORPORATION.
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